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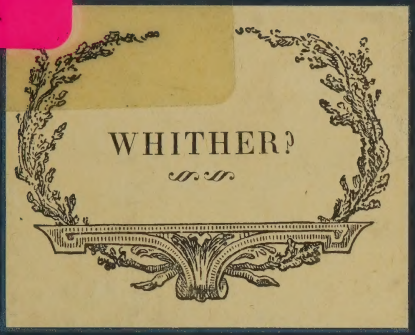

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Ellen Wallace

February, 1916

WHITHER ?

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WHITHER?

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WHITHER ?

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I

In a final division of household possessions of my ancestors, a quaint gray chest has brought me a heritage of unexpected value in packages of letters, written many years ago, and tossed carelessly here with mouse-eaten diplomas and articles of ancient wear. As I read, deciphering oftentimes with difficulty the old-fashioned handwriting on the yellowing paper, I pause to marvel. What fullness of life is here! What richness! What greatness!

There are letters from a mother to a little daughter at school in the city; letters from an aged father who has been visiting his clergyman son; glad letters, written to bring joy at marriages; solemn,

and yet joyous letters, written to console in death. Doubtless they are akin to hundreds of others still resting in the corners of boxes and old desks, and to others innumerable which have perished, recording the experience of a generation, two generations ago. Written out of narrower lives, so far as mere worldly circumstances go, than those with which I come in contact to-day, they reveal a far deeper life, a profounder hope and faith, a recognition of wider horizons than most of our contemporary world knows. Here is a knowledge of spirit as the one great reality; of divine meanings everywhere; a sense of the greatness of the issue in life as a warfare waged in the name of the soul; faith in the undying character of righteousness, in the endlessness of human hope. Words are here traced which take away one's breath, in the grandeur

of their denial of that which seems, in the splendor of assurance: "My sister Mary to-day entered upon eternal life—"

It is not primarily theology upon which they dwell: dogma plays a lesser part here than I should have supposed. It is upon the inner sources of hope and consolation, the life-giving power of faith, faith drawn often from hard experience, faced in the light of a great hope. Here is a real sense of the swift flitting of things earthly, and the great promise therein; here is a constant dwelling upon the Master, the face of the Master, the vision of perfectness. Those writers repeat lovingly his words, thus bringing one another courage in sharp anguish of grief and at beds of illness; and the thought of sacrifice is ever in their minds, of outer loss that is great inner gain. One is aware of certain immovable tenets of hard theology, but

I note that these have small part in their thought, their feeling, in the way in which faith vitalizes their daily lives.

Letters that I am privileged to see today are as different as if they were written by a different race; chance articles in newspapers and journals, intended to appeal to the contemporary public, reinforce the impression in regard to our present absorptions, our present limitations. These later letters are no less full of human tenderness, and possibly they are more outspoken in regard to it, but they bespeak an inner poverty, a contrasting narrowness of life. Their largeness, if wide horizons are suggested, is external, geographical, — the largeness of travel abroad, by land or sea, of motor-trips there or at home. They are full of restlessness, desire for change, rushing hither and yon. Their great concern is with material

things: diet, dress, details of operations, fluctuations in stocks. There is much about reform, suffrage, the fighting of Tammany, measures for the physical betterment of factory boys and girls. There are many wrongs to right, for the most part centring in the body; but, in spite of my sympathy with each distinct measure and my strenuous efforts to help forward some of them, I feel great sense of lack. The horizon is near and attainable; the sky comes down like a brass bowl over our heads; I stifle in this world of nostrums, of remedies, of external cures for moral evils. This superficial material optimism which ignores the deepest need, the deepest answer, fails to suffice. One is aware of a lessening life, a drying of the very sources of vitality; the old sense of illimitable destiny, of greatness, of the challenge of eternity, is gone.

A kind of materialistic Epicureanism dominates our modern world; robbed of Eternity, we mean to make Time pay to the uttermost,—hence this nervous excitement, this feverish activity. Has any question been more absorbing during the last decades than the question how much space could be covered, on earth or in air, in a minute of time? Back of our hurry lies something deeper than the mere desire to excel in this or that sport, this or that means of rapid transit, this or that business enterprise or philanthropy. It is an unconfessed manifestation of our immense sense of loss; a morbid outpouring of that energy which might work healthily and to great ends if the old hope were there of endless destiny. We have but a few minutes in which to rob the house of life; let us seize all the articles in sight; death, the householder, is even now wait-

ing to take us into custody. We want as much as we can get; we want all, and we foolishly think that hurrying feet and twitching muscles can win it. We will crowd all into the swift, flitting minutes, though Life should break in the process.

II

THE question why we, who are the heirs of all the ages, should be so much worse off than our ancestors in that which means essential life might well give us pause. In all external matters we seem to have made great gain. We are carried about more swiftly; our houses have far superior plumbing; the goods we purchase are delivered more promptly, and existence has in every way become far more convenient and easy. Is not this the age of progress? Progress — it is a word constantly on men's lips; have earlier ages ever heard such a din of talk about progress? It would appear as if our forefathers had little claim to be called happy, having lived before the time of great modern

inventions and discoveries; yet, with this sheaf of old records in my hands, and many memories at work, I am forced to admit that the comparison works the other way. Here, in these fading papers, is a sense of significance in living, of illimitable destiny, that makes me ask why we are thus stripped, robbed, disinherited. Why is it that we seem to have inherited all of life except the point? The willful poverty of our spiritual lives contrasts strangely with their quiet sense of great possessions.

After all, are frenzied motion and progress synonymous? Any kitten chasing its own tail might, if we were really observant, disprove for us much of our modern claim of great gain. Would any age of real progress talk so much about progress, and so loudly count its achievements? Is not much of this done to hide the inner

sense of loss and lack? Perhaps it is from a far-off country childhood that I derive a persistent belief, not obscured by all the noise and dust and glamour of our time, that real growth is silent. For many and many a day I have heard this glowing talk of progress, of widening intellectual horizons, and for many a day have watched the growing wistfulness of human faces. The more thoughtful become increasingly sad, while the number of the merely stolid increases apace, as do the restless ones, with their apparent longing for distraction and change. Unfinished faces, unsatisfied faces, are familiar to us all. They lack the high record of experience greatly taken; expression that denotes profound inner life. To-day we are so comfortable, so enlightened, and, with our widening philanthropy, so estimable, that we surely ought to be happy! Yet

we see few satisfied faces, such as we can remember from long ago, full of inner content, — faces "on which the dove of peace sat brooding," — and we pause to ask what our boasted progress has to offer by way of compensation for the great loss that has come through the seeming gain of these later years?

The whole emphasis of life has changed since those days; its focus has shifted. The meanings of existence were to our ancestors inner meanings; now, passionate clutching at externals betrays a different aim. They show themselves capable of fault and error in these recorded experiences of old days, yet they are lightened and lifted by a great power; they touch ever the divine. Their contrasted reading of the significance of life shows most emphatically in this: they thought and felt in terms of the spirit. The modern world

thinks and lives and speaks in terms of the body, not of mind and soul. The soul, that secret of personality, conceived as a part of one not wholly caught in the mechanical chain of things and capable of choice, was their great concern. To them a little child was something sacred, immortal, whose endless destiny commanded of those to whom it was entrusted, alertness, watchfulness, lest its feet should go astray from the narrow path that led to the heavenly hills. Words spoken near the cradle where the new-born baby lay, turned the spot to holy ground.

To those of us who are most advanced to-day, a little child is a little animal; few are left who, in its presence, think of sacredness any more than in the presence of a little pig. There is the utmost alertness in meeting its physical needs; there is, if possible, a trained nurse to bring

scientific knowledge to its requirements, to keep loving fingers away; but the ideas that encircle it concern for the most part its body. Meanwhile, the most progressive thought of the age is busy with the question whether its standard cannot be raised to that of choice animal stock; whether the infant human being may not be bred, as colt or calf of approved ancestry is bred, by choice of the physically fit. This represents the furthest vision of the future; this is the goal against which the imagination of the present dreams.

III

It is an era of the flesh and its needs, its possibilities, — of unawareness, for the most part, of any aspects deeper than the physical. Many of us can remember the day when we were taught that we had immortal souls, to whose safeguarding thought and care and profound endeavor must go. The chief question was, "Is it right or wrong?" The chief question to-day is, "Is it sterilized?" Life, which used to be a brave flight between heaven and hell, has come to be a long and anxious tip-toeing between the microbe and the antiseptic. It is not that I object to antiseptics, but that I object to the amount of good brain-space they have come to occupy, to the exclusion of more important matters.

The modern world has a new and elaborate dogma of the body, but conviction (if it exist) in regard to the soul is tentative and wary. For many a past year the faith has been taught, the belief has been growing, that physically fit of necessity means mentally fit, that physical power is the measure of a man's efficiency. The one glory of our college life lies in its sports, and education of mind is more and more giving way to education of muscle. The only ideal of perfection now in evidence is an ideal of physical perfection; for this no sacrifice is too great, no case too onerous. Images of perfect bodily development are kept before the young, — the Apollo, with beauty of sinew and muscle; but the face of the Christ is growing ever more and more dim before their eyes, and is more and more apologetically presented, if presented at all.

Yet this worship of the body, with its elaborate ritual of observances, its priests, its solemn rites; its great festivals wherein spellbound spectators, fifty thousand, a hundred thousand strong, in huge amphitheatres witness contests of physical strength; this monotheistic devotion, made up of fears for the flesh, and hope for the flesh, lacks much of a true religion.

I have often of late wished that some one wise enough in knowledge of things Latin would write the history and the inner development of a young Roman Progressive in the early stages of the Roman decadence. What feeling of growth and gain would be there to record! What assurance of outdistancing his crude forefathers! What sense of widening horizons, and of sudden freedom in laying aside old scruples! The point

of time chosen should be that at which the word *Salus*, salvation, began to be interpreted as physical salvation, and the persistent concern with bodily life marked the beginnings of decay.

The one saving grace of our time perhaps lies in its generous philanthropic and social effort. We are more sensitive to our neighbor's needs than we used to be, but we have a most limited conception of our neighbor's needs, and, with all our quickened sympathy, we do our neighbor injustice in failing to recognize his deepest necessity. Grown so pitiful of hunger, why do we fail to realize the spiritual starvation of these years? We devise all sorts of machinery for ameliorating his physical condition, for getting him more pay, securing him better dramatic spectacles; we teach him that his house should be plumbed, his children's

food sterilized; but for him and for his benefactors wider vision would mean great gain. We are feeding the lesser hunger; that is well, but it is not enough; we are arming him to meet the lesser foe. Does he, too, feel a sense of inner loss and lack in it all? All that America has to offer may be a poor exchange for the mystic faith brought with him from the fatherland. At least we should beware lest harm come to our neighbor through our manifold preoccupations with the needs of the body, through the contagion of an ideal of material comfort as the greatest earthly good; for even perfect physical well-being has its limitations as a solution of the problem of existence. The destiny of man — once terror and splendor attended the word; it was once a spiritual mystery, connoting endless endeavor, endless opportunity. Now the

highest dream of high destiny is the porcelain bathtub, or some safe shelter behind a wire screen, beyond the attack of germs.

One wonders, moreover, why so much applied Christianity to-day fails to recognize itself as Christianity, and is disassociated from the faith in spiritual verities which brought it into being. Now and then one hears a philanthropic scientist claim that the new efforts to aid humanity originated with beneficent science, or an economist that the move toward betterment is the result of economic thought, both ignoring the great force which has kept alive through ages the impulse toward love of one's brother; both mistaking new methods for ancient motive power and unaware of their own relation to it. Yet back of this recent effort is the impetus of long years of definite religious

teaching, with its potency in quickening the will, — to be reinforced perhaps, but never replaced, by the teaching of practical efficiency. Will this effort to succor continue, as that diviner pity, that healing done in the name of the Father, slips more and more from men's minds? Will this present sense that one's neighbor should have similar clothing and similar "modern conveniences" to one's own prove a lasting basis of human brotherhood? The love of one's fellow man must be fed from deeper springs.

We have need of profounder faith, and of more poignant fear than this age knows. I am not sure that all the physical benefits that could be imagined or enumerated for ourselves or for others could make up for the supreme loss in this shifting the attention, altering the whole emphasis of life in the innumerable ways

in which the physical now obtains over the mental and spiritual. We look longingly back to our forefathers, who lived primarily in the spirit, with constant sense of spirit-values, not in the flesh and that hoped-for immortality of the flesh, — or the nearest approximation to it, — that haunts our world to-day. In our great outer prosperity and inner poverty, our immense acquisition of external knowledge, and incalculable loss of deeper realities, our morality shifting its great concern from the welfare of the soul to that of the body, we find no symbol so fitting as the old fable of the dog and his shadow in the brook. Dropping his bone to grasp the shadow of the bone, he went hungry away.

Why this swift renunciation of that which has made for profounder life in our ancestors, and the loud cry of Prog-

ress as the treasure slips away? There is no age which has known in theory so much regarding orderly development in human affairs, the growth of the present from the past, and no age which has shown so little sense of the deeper meaning of these laws. The human race has never talked so much of continuity, and never, perhaps, has it made so sharp a turn. Modern science has taught us much concerning organic growth, cause, and effect as dominating the physical world; evolutionary theory is the basis of our study of language, of literature, of all human institutions. Clearly and unmistakably comes the teaching of our time that, in all aspects of life, the present is rooted in the past, indissolubly united in unbroken chain; but, curiously enough, whereas the law has been grasped in connection with matters material, matters

intellectual, matters æsthetic, in matters spiritual there is a sudden halt or break. We prattle learnedly of evolution, but we have little conception of it in that which should be the deepest concern of life, the development of the soul. Nature, we are told, admits no gaps, yet it would seem that the great modern majority turns abruptly from the faith which has sustained human life from generation to generation, ignoring, as no age before has done, the best in the past. In so doing, does it not repudiate the law upon which our understanding of everything else is based? Distrusting in the study of physical life any theory not based upon ideas of growth, sequence, old custom, in matters spiritual we demand the fresh, the untried; not for reverence of that which has been attained, but because we find an idea startling and original, do we welcome it.

When Bergson assures us that an element of will is to be reckoned with in all growth, is it because we have drifted so near enslavement to a purely mechanical system of thought that we hail this as new doctrine and therefore acceptable? If it were whispered abroad that the idea is of unimaginable antiquity, that it has been at the basis of every ethical system ever founded, would his large audiences dwindle? If the idea of God, of immortality, could be advertised among the novelties, instead of among the long inheritances, who would refuse to believe? Belief in the universe as essentially spiritual, God-created; belief in the deathlessness of the human soul, belief in right-doing in the light of these great faiths, have been associated with the age-long growth of the race; can we ignore, or lightly cast aside, that which

has been at the very heart of the spiritual evolution of our forefathers?

It is not merely in matters of religious faith that we find this sudden break with the past; the ignorance shown by many modern leaders of the glory of our literature; their pride in this disregard of "the best that has been thought and said in the world"; their assumption that that which antedates contemporary discovery is worthless, is full of menace. A great thinker of a hundred years ago, I was recently told, is "a back number," and therefore valueless. Again comes that puzzling thought of continuity, the necessity of recognizing all the stages of growth. Why the enormous importance of every step in the physical past, this slight regard for the mental development? The race-experience, or the best of it, is recorded in our literature; here

again are the foundations upon which we must build, if we are to build truly. Here is treasure too great to throw away so lightly.

IV

Back of all this absorption in physical and material welfare lies, of course, the preponderating intellectual influence of the century just past, with its passionate pursuit of truth through matter. No one wishes to decry the services of science to our knowledge of the physical world; the great discoveries in the theoretical field, the great inventions in the applied. It is one of the profoundest ironies of human existence that our blessings and our curses come subtly intertwined; we mortals forget that one seldom comes without the other, and are prone to take as pure blessing that which is new. The measure of curse in our latest great achievements may be greater than we

dream, although it is difficult for people to believe, in the sweep of a great movement, that it can mean anything but pure progress in a straight line. Yet we move ever by zigzags, this extreme and that. When will the race ever learn the art of mental equilibrium, of steady advance, employing all the human faculties, instead of exploiting a few?

The many subtle wrongs done the human spirit by this complete surrender to the world of matter, it would be difficult to enumerate. I recall the emphatic assertion of one of the new thinkers, arguing with one who held in all sincerity the old, simple faith: "The only subject worth study is man, man considered from a biological point of view." The initial genesis, the growth, the inevitable end, the physical actions and reactions,—that is man from the biological point of view.

In the presence of people who hold this belief I feel as if an extinguisher were coming down, slowly smothering my very flame of life. You doubtless recall that iron chamber of Spanish Inquisition times, so fashioned that it closed in, day by day, a few inches upon the unfortunate inmate? So life to-day, for unnumbered people, grows narrower, threatening extinction. That earlier victim had no choice; one can but marvel at the modern folk, who themselves turn the key that shuts them in, and are content with their lessening world.

The voices of those who claim that mind is a secretion of matter, of those who find the way to truth through matter only, though not representing the wisest in our intellectual vanguard, have been heard above the others, and humanity is prone to follow where the loud

voices call. Whether it is the fault of the leaders, or of the forlorn camp-followers who trail after the victorious army, picking up and misusing scraps of information; whether it is the fault of passive on-lookers, ready to believe anything that is told by anybody,—be it professional utterance or popular inferences therefrom, in many cases unwarranted, —certain it is that we have spent the greater part of our lives in the shadow of the crass materialism which is one of the by-products of the machinery, intellectual and other, of the period just drawing to a close. It is a doctrine which fits absolutely the great and sudden influx of wealth during the last decades, pandering to the same tendencies, the same blindnesses, a twofold materialism of theory and practice.

It is a materialism stupid, unfounded,

turning its back upon the earlier idealisms of poet, philosopher, religious believer, not so much because of reasoning processes as because of a sudden shifting of attention. Wonderful things may be observed under the microscope, wonderful things through the telescope; wonderful things are day by day invented. Is it likely that there is anything beyond all this? To recent generations, as to that progressive dog, the reflection in the water seemed for the moment, as is often the case, more real than the reflected object; hence this tragedy of loss.

The human mind has been suddenly diverted by a loud noise outside; a sudden change of tension results. Where one looks quickly, all heads are turned. It is a noise of motor-boats, aeroplanes, engines of all kinds; a sight of airships,

flying like birds; of submarines, diving like fish; of moving pictures with their endless panorama. Mankind is childishly diverted; the hearing of the ears, the seeing of the eyes, — it is enough. The skepticisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries tried to reason out their origins, to explain upon what they were based; not so here. This is the most unthinking of systems, not troubling to give a rational account of itself. Thought is out of fashion: nowadays we observe! Through this preponderance of observation over thought in this great period, the human mind has greatly suffered in surety of process, in logic, in differentiation of mental processes. The exercise of pure reason has become almost obsolete; the idea that thought can be exercised apart from sense, from study of phenomena, is all but forgotten. Whether

or not we assume that matter is the origin and the end of all things, the world of to-day thinks in terms of matter; is content to live and breathe and have its being in matter; hopes, aspires, and prays, if it hope, aspire, and pray at all, in terms of matter.

Our very vocabulary is degraded; the most far-reaching symbols of our language come seldom into use, or appear with diminished meaning. Follow, for instance, the course of the word "infinite" through the antics of contemporary literature. Our phraseology has become carnal; our vital terms are terms of physical life. Nowhere is the limitation of contemporary thought more apparent than in these instruments of speech. One must read again Wordsworth, Shelley, Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Meredith, to meet great words, now little employed, that make you realize the ut-

most reach of life; in so doing, one pauses in dismay, realizing how full contemporary speech is of lesser terms, how few employ the greater words that tell the inner life of the soul.

All forms of idealism have suffered during the past century of progress, more through being ignored than through being refuted; there still are thinkers who consider Kant, with his demonstration of the universe mind-made, a wiser teacher than any who have followed him, yet these have few disciples. Of the two old hypotheses, that this is a world of spirit, that it is a world of matter, the latter has been the predominant choice of our time. That choice has been reinforced by the impact of a wonderful physical and material development, while there has been no corresponding gain in the spiritual and the purely intellectual; for many years

the best of the fine young energy of the race has busied itself, either in investigation or in invention, with the world of matter. We hear endlessly of the great advance of our time, of the surety of its knowledge, the doing away with baseless old idealisms. What, after all, has been achieved? The origin of human thought, the destination of the human thinker, are as profound a secret as before this unparalleled progress. Science, which has been the great intellectual adventure of the last century,—to what has it led us? Only again to that edge of the unknown, where we confront the infinite. It has not gained by one hair's breadth upon the encompassing mystery of our lives.

V

THE special form of idealism held by our forefathers, the Christian faith, with its great central tenets of God, immortality, the necessity of right-doing in the light of these faiths, has suffered with the other forms of idealism during the last decades. Those who, intentionally or unintentionally, have attacked, many of those who have defended, have alike done it injury. Of our intellectual vanguard, some have denied, some have ignored, some have been wisely patient and silent, awaiting the adjustment of new wisdom to old. As for the first,—surely those who hold sense-observation to be the basis of all knowledge should take no such vast leap into the dark as that involved in denial

of these old beliefs. It is when certain of these new thinkers slip beyond their own self-defined province, and philosophize in ways contradicting their own premises, that one fails to follow them; when, grown bold with their conquest of physical nature, they make a vast leap from observation of phenomena into metaphysical statement, without consciousness of what they are doing, that one listens with profound distrust. Doubtless we have all known one or two, ready to make assertions dogmatic beyond the dogmatism of old theology, founded upon nothing but the assumption that they, who can truly observe facts in the physical world, could assert nothing but fact. I respect them when they observe; I tremble when they begin to generalize.

It is indeed a crowning irony when one is called upon to believe, in the name of

discoveries in the world of phenomena, that faith in God and in immortality is untenable. Because it is possible to see with the aided eye organisms unsuspected before our day,—this does not prove that the immemorial spiritual instincts of humanity have no foundation. The assumption that the great hopes of mankind cannot be true because they cannot be detected under microscope or through telescope, has floated in the air, darkening wise counsel, has assumed an authority never won; the present is full of unnecessary renunciations and unproved denials. In the intoxication of new discovery regarding the laws of organic growth, the leap from belief in unseen realities to doubt or to denial has been too swift and too absolute. Probably, in a great majority of cases, thought, intellectual process, has had little to do with the change. Hu-

manity has lost hope without knowing why; the air has been thick with doubt and fear. Hearing a great noise in the dark, aware of attack, many have rushed away, leaving great treasure, while the enemy was still far from taking the stronghold. This new poverty of life which we call Progress is thus, in many cases, the misfortune, but not the fault, of those who, unable to think for themselves, take for granted that the most insistent voice must be the right voice.

How greatly the defenders of the faith, in much of the warfare, have missed the issue! The time that has been lost, the good territory yielded in contesting the literal interpretation of Genesis, may well fill us with shame. If the story of the serpent of Eden must slip from dogma to myth, must faith in the unseen realities therefore go? If our forefathers were

wrong in linking the large faith of their spiritual lives indissolubly with the story of Adam and that of Jonah, we must discriminate where they failed to discriminate, remembering in all humility that with their smaller knowledge of external things went a far profounder knowledge than ours of things spiritual. We must keep the greater; the less is not to us the sacrifice it was to them; let it go!

If we ask, why this close linking with myth, who can answer? We know only that the human soul develops slowly; shade by shade the truth grows clear. We, who have learned something of the incredible slowness of physical development, can afford to have patience with the spiritual, but we cannot afford to let slip back anything that the soul has achieved, proved, made its own. In the long quarrels over the husk, the kernel

has too often slipped out of sight; essentials have gone with unessentials. We can no longer in good faith teach the young that the misfortune of our present predicament may be traced to eating an apple; but those of us who are unable to step to the marching music of our time may, in impassioned good faith, until modern thinkers make a better case against us than they have yet made, teach the young that the great realities of life are of mind and soul, not body; that growth and change are necessary, fundamental, vital, the very condition of life; that it is for them to remove reverently whatever outer veil may have obscured their forefathers' great light of faith; but that doom is upon them if they lose the light.

Doubtless the greatest wrong done the Christian faith by its defenders was the attempt to reduce it to a mere matter of

reasoning. The pity of it is that, at a time when the whole fabric of Christianity was shaken and the whole spiritual life was at stake, theologians should so have emphasized fact, clinging to a dead literalness of interpretation! Through the long decades of the nineteenth century, trying to meet the geologists upon their own ground, they were very properly worsted. Why borrow, and use weakly, weapons which belong to a different warfare, knowledge? Sense-perception, playing a large part, and rightly, in science, is neither starting-point nor goal here, nor is historical fact. Proofs of a real religion are not limited to repetition of fact. When they imitated the scientists, in their demand for external evidence, and imitated them badly, the inevitable happened. More and more their own great world of spiritual aspiration and endeavor was

ignored by those whose high privilege it was to make known the vitalizing power of the faith they held, its subtle answer to the soul's deepest need. The doom of a faith is its loss of inner sources of vitality, its "materialization in fact," and perhaps the Church has been rightly punished for forgetting that its weapons should be primarily weapons of the spirit, its world the world of divine endeavor. This is no time to haggle over theology; the object is not to save the church, but to save alive the souls of men.

Myth could go; dogma itself could go; Christianity would still be. Milestones in the path of the human spirit, dogmas have done great service, but none have been great enough to express the potential greatness of the spiritual life of the human race. Greatly have they helped; at times they have greatly hindered. Seem-

ingly necessary bulwarks in time of stress and siege, the human soul has lived on after their demolishing; the human spirit is greater than they. Modern warfare has demonstrated that great forts and intrenchments are useless; that does not mean that there is to be no fighting. Faiths, beliefs, patriotisms are still there, but the fighting is to be in the open, a matter of life and death, the issue an issue of vitality.

VI

We have our choice; both propositions have been made: we are all body, wholly involved in a mechanical scheme of things, or we are partly free, recognizing within us faculties not wholly subordinated to the rigid physical law of necessity, free to choose, to struggle toward high aims, to succeed in part, in part, perhaps, fail. Pending proof to the contrary, let us assume that our wills have a certain freedom. It is at least better "strategy and tactics" in the battle of life than the reverse. In the absence of a microscopic test to determine the matter, it may be well to demonstrate the existence of the power by using it, making decisive choice of the finer hypothesis,

and asserting our right to do so. Perhaps the trouble has come not wholly from the activity of the materialists, but partly from the failure of the idealists to stand by their guns. The folly of perpetual defensive on the part of the idealist has been abundantly demonstrated in late years; it is for him to take the offensive, to claim and hold his own, ceasing to be shamefaced, explanatory, apologetic! Whatever special form our denial of the supremacy of matter may take, whether philosophic or religious, of Plato and Kant, or of Christ, we should band together against this tyranny that threatens the inner life of the race, and affirm the supremacy of spirit.

Consider our forefathers' faith in the light of a working hypothesis, if you will. It is an age of hypotheses; science is ceaselessly busy with them. Its finest achieve-

ments have followed great imaginative conceptions, some of which have been verified by observed fact, some of which have been disproved, some of which, neither proved nor disproved, are still looked upon as a firm basis of knowledge.

The odd thing is that, in science, a whole fundamental assumption may go without interfering with the validity of the information based thereon; disproving one hypothesis, science goes serenely on. They taught me in my college days the indivisible atom quite as dogmatically as, earlier, I had been taught the literal reality of the story of Eve and the serpent. The fact that the atomic theory is now questioned, if not overthrown, in no way invalidates the truths of chemistry, while the passing of the serpent has, in some strange fashion, meant for many people the passing of the Christian faith.

It has, in reality, nothing to do with the central tenets of the Christian faith, which are: that the universe is a universe of spirit, controlled by a great spiritual force, for great ends; that, for the guidance of stumbling humanity, the great spiritual force took human form; that mere human beings, keeping mind and soul intent upon that great example, may work out through love and sacrifice immortal meanings in their lives. Has any better working hypothesis ever been suggested to humankind?

Science says, "Here are certain phenomena which we can explain in no other way"; and gives its splendid guess. Why deny to our spiritual life a method freely used in science, the assumption of an hypothesis that most nearly explains observed facts, with the hope of proving it true as knowledge grows more profound?

Why may we not say, "Here are certain persistent hopes, inner needs, longings, which we can explain only on the assumption that the universe is a universe of spirit"? These beliefs have been associated with the age-long growth of the race, and are perhaps the very condition of its mental and spiritual development. These facts of the inner life are as truly facts as are those of the outer world, though scientific absorption in matter has made mankind forget this. It is strange that a generation so fond of emphasizing fact should have ignored or even denied the most important facts of all, and so have brought about a crushing limitation to our endeavor. Not only in the external world are facts to be found: the hope, the faith, the long aspiration of the race, those persistent convictions of enlarging destiny which have played so great a part in

human growth, — shall these be of no account? When such immense importance is attached to every phase of physical growth in the past, how can we deny the wealth of spiritual experience without being false to the very laws of thought?

So we ask, not what happened to our remotest forbears in the Garden of Eden, but what has happened to our nearer forefathers, whose needs were akin to our own, that will help our human existence. To what have they gallantly held? To what have they come back? To what did they inevitably turn in cruel times of suffering? What are the hopes they could not forget, slow century by century of trial, disappointment, aspiration, agony? Persistent faith in unending life, in which should come the crowning of the spiritual endeavor of this; indomitable belief

in righteousness, in distinction between right and wrong; God, a divine wisdom working through all the show of things,—such was their faith. Our forefathers tried and proved it and found it good, living difficult lives and dying hard deaths full of a sense of conquest, of triumph. Their working hypothesis has yet to be surpassed.

The old teaching — whether or not we share the exact shade of intellectual interpretation of ultimate mystery — brought a better sense of relative values than we have now, and a far greater chance of progress. Faith in soul is a better working programme than faith in body. Working forward, however eugenically, toward the Perfect Brute is a poor hope at best. There can be no growth without the boundless, the illimitable, ahead, and the great hopes, undisproved, still shine before us. Life must be made great in its

scope, its demand, if it is to achieve greatly. It is a sorry thing to have the guiding forces mere shallow intellectual forces,—mere intellectualism is always shallow,—to reduce the whole of the hope and the wonder and the terror of life to the seeing of the eye, the hearing of the ear, the mere logical deduction, while the larger nature sleeps abashed. A sound hypothesis must cope with all the facts involved; our working hypothesis of life must reckon with the deepest striving of our nature, its furthest longing, its most imaginative reach. There has been great waste of unused powers in these later decades of our period of progress. Half only, and the lesser half, of the human being has been called into activity; the better part of the human faculties have been among the "unemployed."

Is it not time for the sleepers to waken,

rub their eyes, and say, "There is a greater in us than you have let us recognize. This attempt to solve the problems of human nature while leaving the best of human nature out of account has shown its inadequacy. The materialistic interpretation of the universe with its attendant cult of the body is a *cul-de-sac*. Life, personality, are full of larger needs and larger powers than the present trend of thought permits us to recognize; and life must know the diviner hunger, the deeper thirst, if it is to win significance." This progress, which ignores the higher aspiration, the profounder stirring of the nature, — shall we be therewith content?

> Through hope, through faith, through love's transcendant dower
> We feel that we are greater than we know,

wrote a poet-philosopher who dared trust his soul as leader. In this mathematical

and scientific age there is a dread of feeling, of impulse; a fear of this greater self that hopes and fears and prays. We recognize the great part that feeling and impulse play in the evolution of the world of living creatures; yet man, in trying to solve the riddle of his destiny, is forever searching for some narrow rationalistic explanation which will shut these large factors out. There is great distrust of intuition, of the imaginative faculty, when dealing with the inner life; yet imagination, intuition, hold an important place in the study of the outer world; the greatest discoveries in science are, no less than the great achievements of creative art, the result of imaginative grasp of the unrealized. If intuition, daring conjecture, afford such signal service in winning knowledge of the world of matter, why should we, who wish to believe something

deeper than that world can ever teach us, be deprived of the use of our larger faculties? Feeling, emotion, play a large part, perhaps the best part, in our sum of human wisdom; passion is a fine instrument of discovery, — spiritual passion, of spiritual truth. Of the utmost help these can give us we have utmost need, as we have of imagination, the divining power, that seer into the inner realities of things, and of "the will as vision."

VII

It is partly because of the largeness of its scope for activity of the entire man, the fullness of its appeal to the whole human being, that Christianity surpasses other idealisms as a working basis of life, proves itself the flower of them all. Sharing with others a purely idealistic theory, faith in the spiritual nature of the universe, it brings home that faith in ways unknown to other systems, makes it human, a matter of the hearth, of daily life. It is an idealism which is within the reach of the humblest intelligence; in its humanness, its simplicity, its nearness to the least, it may almost be said to be the only working idealism of all time. The vision of the Perfect Man appeals to the larger self;

feeling is stirred by it, passion touched, and imagination, that power through which alone creative work is done, forever shapes fairer and fairer conceptions. No other idealism has the compelling power which brings the whole nature into play; so many elements to quicken the will and release hidden stores of energy. In all creative work, mere reasoning process lags behind; life, with its high spiritual possibilities, is creative work. It is for us to fashion it in accordance with our clearest vision of perfection; we have need of the largest hope that we can muster, the loftiest aim. For shaping life to great ends, for employment of all the faculties in the service of a great idealism, impulse, intuition, will, there is nothing that can match the Christian faith in the greatness of its simplicity.

The old, old needs of life are always

with us, the necessity of consolation in grief and loss, of hope enough to keep us trudging along our path. Perhaps not even in its swift response to these great needs of the human being comes the profoundest proof of its supremacy. From the point of view of potential evolution, from the greatness and depth of its challenge, we know its greatness. Christianity, with the sting of its challenge for eternity, suggests enough of progress to satisfy the human soul once started on its way. What deeper appeal has ever come than the thought of endless destiny, bringing the awful necessity of living in the light of it?

Not long since, I read in some journal an article in which a writer speaks wistfully of our lost hope in immortality, but adds that we do not so greatly mind, and that our children will mind still less. If this faith is indeed gone, what has hap-

pened to rob us of so great a hope, once entertained? How the demonstration of organic processes in the physical world, which has been the great achievement of our time, can be assumed to reach to that which is beyond sense is hard to say; it would need eternity to disprove the belief, as it needs eternity to prove it. When you try with finite means to define the infinite you make trouble for yourself, and perhaps rob the young of inherited hopes. If our children do not mind, it will show a phase of degeneracy in them, of willful shutting off of light and life already attained. We shall count them craven if they let go any high ideal once conceived, for that means inevitable retrogression; this should be held as the unforgotten and unforgettable hope of the race. What mortal, when the splendor of such a thought had dawned on him, could let it

go? The endless possibility, the infinite opportunity for growth, the challenge for eternity,—who dare take it, and order his life in accordance with it?

Again, this is the greatest of all idealisms in that it sets for the human being the hardest and the highest of all human tasks, self-sacrifice. The wonder of it, that across the old physical law of survival of the fittest by brute means, supreme, unchecked, unhindered two thousand years ago, could have crept the gleam of a higher law, strangely contradicting it,—the survival of that which is fittest in the individual, perhaps at the expense of the body. The greatest marvel in all the world's history is that Christ could have been; that the very idea of soul, of human development transcending the physical in utter self-sacrifice, could have come into existence is proof enough of the divine. That

teaching, so clear, so unmistakable, has been blurred and forgotten, as nation and individual have succumbed to the lesser law, but it still is there. Christianity left behind? It is millions of years ahead, so far ahead that it is still dim before our vision.

Must æons pass before the human race will begin to realize how great was that message, how divine, how far it reached into depths which nothing else had touched, how high, how all but unattainable its service? Is there no chance for this Christianity, with its stern teaching of sacrifice, of eternal endeavor, for this faith, never tried with sufficient freedom from the trammels of dogma, with the deepest challenge, the highest possibility that has come before the race?

Since no life can be worth living without faith in power transcending nature's

manifestations of physical force; without some ideal of human conduct, of right and wrong, rising above the needs of "biological man"; without a sense of further scope, of wider opportunity than the mere span of human existence allows; since our forefathers held these high beliefs and lived more greatly than we; since no man has disproved them; since the very effort to disprove is a contradiction of the laws of thought, carrying processes of reason into depths of life profounder than reason; since we have powers, capabilities of emotion, divination of higher meanings; since we know aspiration, hope, love, let us use these greater powers and let them build our greater world. The choice is ours; why choose the less, and fling away the greater?

The only genuine progress for us is

progress in the inner life. We know the greater meaning, the higher significance, not in the mere way in which the facts of the physical world are known, but in a far higher way. By that uncertainty, full of challenge, which is the condition of real growth, rousing the creative will, it is ours to make great our lives in accordance with the loftiest hope the race has known.

VIII

Much of what I have been saying was written before this war began. In the great hush that has fallen upon the nations, is it not well for us to stop and ask anew whither our progress has been tending? What words have those who have been taught to live and breathe and think in terms of matter, wherewith to voice this awful stirring of the soul? People cry out that the Dark Ages will come again through this fearful slaughter, this waste of resources intellectual and material. Have not the Dark Ages been with us for decades? For mankind, more and more stripped of the deeper faith, the larger hope, more and more cut off from the finer part of his own

nature, what darker ages can there be than these shadowed by the dreary positivism, undiscussed and undefined, but merely assumed, of our day? Many a thinker must see, in this present awful crisis, not an isolated phenomenon, not a mere political event for which a train of political causes had been laid, but also one of the natural results of our ways of thinking, of our kind of progress. The growth of material over spiritual conceptions in the last fifty years is appalling; to such an end the Gospel of the Perfect Brute legitimately leads. We may believe ourselves through this struggle untouched, apart, and watch with wonder and surprise, but the same forces are at work with us, and potent. This terrible, crashing exposure is something to make us, who are not in the thick of the battle, stop and think.

We are shuddering at a German nation Nietzscheized, brutalized, as we conceive, through a brutal ideal; but are the Germans so far removed? Have they not simply adopted, a little more vigorously, a little more frankly than we, a doctrine which is becoming the moving force in all countries, replacing Christianity? Are they not simply the most progressive of all nations? Since the theory of evolution was demonstrated, the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, which should be taught as the mere working of a physical law, has come to be taught as ethics, and an odd confusion of thought has come about. How insidiously the idea of the biological necessity is coming to be considered the whole necessity of man, we are only now faintly realizing; the need of spiritual struggle, of spur to that instinct which

may save man from much that had seemed biological necessity, is becoming more and more dim. It is one thing to recognize warfare in the physical world, the strife that attended the evolution of man; it is another thing to exalt this to a code of conduct and deliberately teach it. A conscious lowering of nature to the first primitive impulse, a deliberate going backward, is a very different matter from following these impulses in the slow process of growth. If a higher thought comes along your line of vision, woe betide you if you choose the lower! Doubtless dragons and prehistoric monsters would have behaved differently if they had got better ideas into their heads; we shall not be acquitted by posterity if, after a finer ideal has been suggested, we go back to writhing and biting in the slime.

I am a plain American citizen, with no direct connection with this war, as innocent of having anything to do with starting it as the Kaiser is claimed by his upholders to be; yet I feel a sense of guilt. I am ashamed to look the young in the face; it seems to me that, in some way, we older folk have betrayed them in letting humanity come to such a pass; in tampering with the ways of thought and of belief which have let this thing be. This deification of biological man has not as yet gone with us so far as exalting the gospel of warfare; we cry out, when we see the logical outcome of ideas taught with such fervor through the last decades, against the German evangel of the mailed fist.

Yet England too has her theorists teaching the biological necessity of war, that the fundamental laws which govern

human conduct are the laws of brute force, the survival of the fittest in death struggle. America has been too profoundly influenced by Germany in educational matters, has sat too submissively at her feet, to escape. Accepting so many of the minor premises of her teaching, will not the major ultimately follow as a matter of course?

It is Germany that has carried furthest this materialistic modernism, has perfected it. The word Germany has been a name to conjure with in swift denial if one but ventured to suggest the possibility of a spiritual interpretation of life. High intellectual achievement has been that of the Germany of these later years, but not the highest; she has kept the mailed fist upon the spiritual aspirations of mankind, and has made a treaty, on her own terms, with the human soul,

with what loss of territory! We have not yet accepted the whole of this new evangel; we have doubts, mental reserves. Neither have we, in our period of enlightenment, made gain in developing those forces of mind and soul that would enable us to refute it.

Man, from a purely biological point of view, indulging in the biological necessity of war in the year of our Lord 1915, is a sorry spectacle, but perhaps it is, as Mr. Shandy said, "no year of our Lord at all," so progressive are we. Now that we make our swift leap backward many thousand years, we pause to wonder whether this means only a quickened pace in a direction already chosen. Of the achievements of the mailed fist the Neanderthaler man, barring a difference of weapons, would have been capable. How shall we escape this progress which is utter retrogression?

This overwhelming catastrophe has brought the issues squarely before us. It is well that the forces we have to fight have come into the open; we know at last the world we live in. We are face to face, with a distinctness never before presented, with two great principles: the law of brute force, of the survival of the fittest, made into a code of conduct; the law of Christianity, with its possibility of higher development, finer progress than brute force dreamed, — the growth of the greater through sacrifice of the less; soul-achievement at the expense of flesh. In this great hour of need shall we let the shallow intellectualism of much recent thought dominate, or shall we boldly choose that faith in which the best of human life, from its first dim stirring to triumphant self-sacrifice, is summed up? One way lies inevitable slipping backward; the other

way lies progress in inner life too great for word or present vision.

These are crucial moments; how great the crisis none may understand. Many an idealist, lost in the more than forty years of materialism of our time, is praying that out of the horror of the present may come better things: a deeper sense of the deepest needs of life; a knowledge that neither material comfort, nor physical health, nor materialistic thought can wholly satisfy; a hunger and thirst for which only the spiritual can suffice. Suffering bears strange fruit, and the suffering of the present days and of the days to come is incalculable. Even the mental anguish of mere watchers of the strife may help reveal to the modern world as profound need of faith.

One thing is evident in all this awful crash: men still are brave; never before,

perhaps, have they fought against such great odds. The splendor of their courage dims our eyes. Shall the fighters in the world of spirit, "fighters in the noblest fight," be less brave in defending in the face of odds, perhaps never so great before, these inner truths, deeper than dogma, deeper than theology, deeper than life itself, the immemorial heritage of the race, — longing unutterable for righteousness, for faith in the spiritual, for enlarging and unending life?

THE END

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